

Glorious Beings: Creating a New World Culture

Talk Given at Concord House by Frank K. Kelly

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I came into the world in a thunderstorm in June 1914, when great changes were beginning to happen. It was in a year when the First World War engulfed Europe and Africa and Asia, when the powers of science and technology brought down the barriers between nations – and great scientists gave us glimpses of our place in the throbbing universe.

Dr. Brian Swime, a noted physicist, said “The vastness of this universe couldn’t have been otherwise...This universe, which is 30 billion light years across, the smallest universe we could fit into...The universe had to expand at this rate to enable our existence. We belong here. This is home. This has been our home for 15 billion years...If you altered the origin of the universe even just slightly, none of us would even be here. That means then, that our existence is implicit. We don’t only stand on our feet, we stand on the original fireball; we stand on the expansion of the universe as a whole.”

When I gaze at your luminous faces, I am convinced that Dr. Swime is right. I am also sure that Albert Einstein was right when he said that if we could understand what we really are we would know that we are glowing fields of electromagnetic energy. We are also collections of dancing atoms filled with negative and positive charges.

There are auras of light around your amazing bodies and your immortal souls are shining through your eyes.

Look at one another. Listen to one another. Touch one another. Become aware of what glorious beings you are. You are far more involved in shaping the future than you have begun to realize.

Humanity is in a tragic situation. You are surrounded by more dangers than any generation before you. And yet you have more strength, more technological knowledge, more allies to help you than any previous people who came into existence in the years past.

How do I dare to make such statements to you? I dare because I have lived in this body for more than 90 years – and I have experienced many miracles.

In my youth, I poured out stories of man’s incredible achievements. I became known as a pioneer of wonder. I brought the book to show you what came forth from me when I was writing science fiction.

One world was not enough for me. I leaped from planet to planet. I was drawn to the stars, as many young people in my time were. When I walked at night in my father's backyard and gazed at the blazing lights in the sky, I didn't feel dwarfed by them or overcome by their intensity. I saw them as playgrounds for my mind and spirit – and I still do.

I believe that we human beings will triumph over all the horrible problems we may face, and over the bloody history of our failures. We pray and we play. We have divine sparks in us. We discover what Einstein and other great ones among us discovered. Einstein wrote: "Everyone who is involved in the pursuit of science becomes convinced that a Spirit is manifested in the Universe – a spirit vastly superior to that of man, and we must be humble in our awareness of that Spirit moving among us, shaping the future with us."

Through play we discover our kinship with the Almighty Being who brought us into life. God laughs and dances. God gave us the power to find endless joy in celebrating the mysteries and wonders of this life. Some of our scientists brought us into the Nuclear Age and made us realize that we must find ways of living in peace or confront unparalleled catastrophes.

I grew up in a praying and playing family and the Glorious Beings I have encountered seem related to me. I went to Catholic schools where the nuns taught me that I shared in the creative mightiness that had shaped the stars. I felt that I was made to speak freely in all circumstances.

As a young reporter on The Kansas City Star I was sent to a press conference sponsored by Franklin D. Roosevelt, just after he had won re-election by millions of votes. I was given a chance to speak directly with him. He said in a soft voice: "As a journalist you have much power, Mr. Kelly." "Not the powers you have," I said. He tilted his head and said, "But I think I missed my calling." "You did?" I said. "Yes," he answered: "I wanted to be a journalist," he muttered. "You can ask anybody anything – and people have to respond. And nobody tells you what you have to say."

"That's not the kind of power you have," I replied then. He shook his head. "Everybody tries to tell me what to do," the President responded.

I left his presence with amazement. He was famous and beloved by millions of his fellow citizens. But he didn't have the kind of power he wanted!

I realized that some of the Glorious Beings who seem to tower above us do not realize how much strength they have. I had already experienced many frustrations as a journalist, but I didn't feel defeated or crushed by the limitations on me.

In my many years of pursuing "truth" and "solid answers" in my contacts with leaders in many fields, I became aware that it was a special gift to feel "glorious."

In my program here tonight I want you to realize that many “creative beings” serve humanity with a demonstrated dedication to public service but feel in their hearts that they can never attain the fulfillment they are encouraged to seek.

Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King met violent deaths although they were dedicated to non-violence. Albert Einstein and other great scientists knew that they had helped to build devastating weapons that endangered life on earth. Eleanor Roosevelt never succeeded in putting an end to the arms race. She travelled over many parts of the world, demonstrating her willingness to exhaust herself in the noble efforts of the peacemakers. Harry Truman tried to rebuild areas of the earth, which had been savagely scourged by his use of military power.

When I entered journalism in 1935, I spent my first 10 months on The Star’s staff primarily on death notices. In those months, I gained a deep appreciation of the significance of each human life and its impact on all those in the same stages around them. I realized that Kansas City was a segregated place in those years. Blacks and other minorities were in the background, living in their own atmosphere. They had their own churches, their own emergency services, their own hospitals, their own cemeteries.

I became disturbed by the fact that I knew little by the black people and the many poor families existing in my city. After I became an expert in briefly describing many lives, I was suddenly hurled into the hectic atmosphere of the General Hospital. I rode in ambulances with drivers and doctors to the scenes of accidents, explosions, fires, murders, and domestic violence. I saw people lying in the streets or bleeding in back rooms of apartments and boarding houses. I discovered that many men were brutal. They pounded their wives and children with their fists and straps, they crashed into one another with their autos and motorcycles, ran over pedestrians, and exploded with rage when they were frustrated. They had to be shackled or thrown into jails by tough policemen. I became gradually convinced of the superiority of women and began to believe that women should rule the world.

My estimates of women were affected by the fact that women rarely engaged in violent acts themselves. I was always grateful for the kindness of women, for their tenderness and nurturing affections for their parents, their sisters and brothers, their lovers and husbands, their children and their friends. I knew they had human faults and failings; I knew they could be angry and speak harshly about other people; they could be dominating and vindictive; and occasionally inflict blows on other women and men; but they were rarely killers. I became convinced that the flourishing of humanity depended partly upon the civilizing influences of women.

My father demonstrated the aggressive qualities of men. When he got drunk, he was ready to use his fists and any weapons he carried. When I was 3 years old, in 1917, he responded aggressively to President Woodrow Wilson’s call for a declaration of war against Germany after the Germans sank some American ships. He rushed off to enlist in

the army. He was eager to execute the German Kaiser, to make the world safe for democracy. He put me into a little soldier's suit that made me look like a young soldier. He taught me to salute him and all other officers. He was eager to get into combat in France. He killed Germans in face-to-face struggles in the trenches.

He was severely wounded by a piece of shrapnel that lodged in his neck and his face was twisted by a scar on a deep wound. When he came home, he suffered from nightmares of face-to-face attacks. I had to wake him up from those screaming moments, and his yelling haunted me for the rest of my life.

In war, men sought glory by wounding one another or killing their opponents. The young Germans he encountered in the bloody trenches were often as brave as he was, as sure as he was that the murders they committed were justified. Millions died, striving to validate their manhood.

I remember the Armistice Day – November 11 – in 1918 – when church bells rang and victory sirens sounded. I also remember the weeping and wailing of a woman in the boarding house where my mother and I stayed while we waited for my father to return from France. That woman had received a telegram telling her that her husband had been killed in one of the last battles. For her, as for many others who received similar telegrams, the victory was bitter.

Why did glorious beings kill one another? Why did young men, charged with the energy of youth, use heavy weapons to tear off the heads and arms and eyes of their labeled “enemies?” Nobody could answer those questions for me.

I had taken part in World War II, after the United States was directly attacked. I was assured that there would be peace and lasting joy after Hitler and the Japanese militarists had been eliminated. They were smashed in 1945 and those who had fought against them celebrated wildly.

But then we learned that Russia was dominated by a communist dictatorship and Stalin and his minions had to be eliminated, too. I was asked to write speeches for a president, Harry Truman, who had been compelled to make a horrendous decision – to use atom bombs against Japan to end the Second World War. I discovered that he had given much thought to the creation of a global organization to save humanity from the scourge of war.

Truman carried in his wallet a poem by a Glorious Being – Alfred Tennyson – written in 1842, predicting a final war involving aerial navies, which led to the formation of a Federation for the World, a Parliament for Humanity.

A humble man who never exalted himself, Truman had a glorious agenda. He had helped to launch and uphold the United Nations, and he was determined to make it effective in helping all countries to enter an unprecedented era of lasting peace and prosperity. He

strove to get the rich nations to devote some of their tremendous resources to aid the poor nations to reduce or eliminate poverty all over the planet. He proclaimed that “a decent, satisfying life” was “the right of all people.” He shared General Eisenhower’s view that war was a theft from the resources of people.

In the 1948 campaign I helped Truman make the people aware that “the destiny of the United States is to provide leadership in the world toward a realization of the Four Freedoms.” Those Freedoms were articulated in an address to the Congress in 1941 by President Franklin D. Roosevelt. F.D.R. asserted that the American heritage had developed a full understanding of the basic freedoms vital for human progress: Freedom of speech and expression; freedom of worship; freedom from want by assuring a healthy peaceful life – and freedom from fear, by reducing military arms everywhere.

The U.S. had emerged from the horrifying struggle of World War II with a booming economy – and a future with unlimited possibilities. They felt that the future of humanity depended on the ethical behavior of a giant nation.

I shared the hopes of those leaders. I had lived through the transformation of the U.S. from the Depression years, with millions of unemployed and desperate citizens, into a place with dazzling opportunities in every field.

When Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas became chairman of the Center’s board, I worked closely with him. He was a “glorious being,” full of courage and willing to take the initiative in many ways. He advocated Centers in all the major cities of the world.

The Center gave much attention to all the major problems facing humanity, especially the arms race and the Cold War. Two Center pamphlets written by the noted analyst Walter Millis – one on Individual Freedom and the Common Defense and one on The Constitution and the Common Defense – were widely circulated. Millis described what he called “the war system,” and he declared that would have to be dismantled if humanity really wanted to survive. He predicted that the devastating power of nuclear weapons would force the great nations (those with thousands of those weapons) to agree on a nonproliferating treaty to avoid a nuclear holocaust. Albert Einstein, the scientist recognized by all countries, said that the maintenance of such weapons might lead humanity to “drift into an unparalleled catastrophe.” The dire commentaries of many brilliant scientists enabled humanity to avoid that catastrophe during the years of the “cold war” between the U.S. and the Soviets, but the dangers had to be seen for decades.

Nuclear war was avoided but the U.S. plunged into an extensive disaster in Vietnam under several presidents. The Vietnam War brought poverty and slaughter to millions for many years. President Nixon took four years to sanction an American withdrawal.

The “glorious beings” at the Center sponsored a trip to Vietnam by two directors – Harry Ashmore and William Baggs, who went to Vietnam and returned with proposals that could have ended the war in the 1960s. But the leaders on both sides were not ready to settle their differences.

The Center tried in many ways to build foundations for peace through exchanges of ideas and proposals by leaders from many countries who participated in an intervention convocation at the UN based on Pope John’s encyclical *Pacem in Terris*.

Scholars at the Center were active in many ways. It issued warnings on the decay and disarray of democratic institutions long before the Watergate scandal appeared in the headlines. Other Center publications warned of the creeping pollution of the planet, long before millions of people realized that the web of life might be destroyed by such pollution.

In advance of actual developments, people at the Center revealed the thinking of radical students, the changing attitudes of the young toward the whole society, the implications of the changes in race relations, and the demands of ethnic minorities. The Center showed the defects of the mass media at a time when people were not aware of the corruption of the media and the pervasive impact of the press and broadcasting industries on every facet of modern life.

Six years of discussions, involving dozens of meetings and thoughts of 200 consultants (including historians, judges, political scientists, economists, and others) went into the Center’s drafts for a new American Constitution. A model for the 20th century was finally published in 1970. The principal drafter was Rexford G. Tugwell, a former member of President Roosevelt’s “brains trust.” But the man who pushed it into publication was Robert Hutchins, former president of the University of Chicago, the elected head of the Center in Santa Barbara.

The model Constitution was not designed for ratification and implementation but as an instrument for thinking about the issues of the 1970s. At a time when American institutions did not seem to be functioning effectively, the Center scholars hoped that the model might awaken hope in millions of apathetic citizens and bring new vitality to a sagging democracy.

But the development of that model document turned out to be one of most controversial projects in which the Center had ever engaged. It was regarded as foolish, futile, and possibly dangerous to the American system. It stirred hot arguments for years, but it did not produce the long-range effects Hutchins had tried to evoke.

When internal strife occurred at the Center in 1967 and 1975, it became evident to people outside the Center that the scholars on Eucalyptus Hill were not able to solve their own constitutional problems.

Institute of World Culture

In spite of its own internal failures, in spite of all the defects and limitations of its own projects, the Center had an impact on scholars, editors, broadcasters, political leaders, lawyers, economists and others in many fields in many countries.

Admiral Hyman Rickover, commander of the American nuclear submarines, took part in several Center conferences and once donated \$1,000 to help keep the Center going, said he thought the Center's budget was relatively small. He referred to the billions he could get from Congress for nuclear ships and said he thought the Center was more vital for the future of humanity than submarines or other weapons.

Paul Dickson, in his book on American research organizations entitled Think Tanks, said its dedication to future problems gave it a unique role.

Many "glorious beings" were connected with the Center. The threat of annihilation still hangs over humanity's future. The best thinking of the bravest people will always be needed.

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